

## Rules of the Game

# All About Spell-Like Abilities (Part Four)

By Skip Williams



To finish off the topic of spell-like abilities, let's go into using them, conditions that can affect their use, and how often you can use them.

## Using a Spell-Like Ability

As noted earlier, using a spell-like ability requires a standard action and concentration. It requires nothing else. (Also as noted earlier, a spell-like ability has no verbal, somatic, material, focus, or XP components.)

So what does a spell-like ability look like when it's used? Well, the answer is pretty much any way the user wants it to look and can pull off. When a creature simply uses a spell-like ability without any dramatic flourishes, it still shows some sign that it's concentrating. For example, it might stop moving for a moment, or it may furrow its brow (if it has any brows to furrow) or make some incidental gesture. Note, however, that using a spell-like ability is a purely mental action, and a creature could use one even when bound and gagged or when paralyzed. If a creature can think, it can use its spell-like abilities.

Anything that disrupts a creature's mental processes or concentration also prevents the use of spell-like abilities, including the *feeblemind* spell and the following character conditions (refer to the condition summary on page 300 of the ***Dungeon Master's Guide***):

- Cowering
- Dazed
- Dead
- Dying
- Fascinated
- Frightened\*
- Flat-footed
- Nauseated
- Panicked\*
- Petrified
- Stable
- Stunned
- Turned\*
- Unconscious

\*Some spell-like abilities might remain available to the creature, see the notes that follow.

## Additional Notes on Conditions

Some conditions merit additional comments:

**Ability Damage or Ability Drain:** Any ability damage or drain that renders a creature unconscious also renders it unable to use spell-like abilities. Creatures with Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma scores reduced to 0 are unconscious. Reductions in Charisma can reduce the save DC for a creature's spell-like ability if they're sufficient to lower the creature's Charisma modifier.

**Blinded:** A blinded creature usually cannot aim spell-like abilities that duplicate targeted spells (unless it can touch the target) and must specify the point of origin for area or effect spells (see *Aiming a Spell* on page 175 in the *Player's Handbook*). The creature can still aim a ray or touch spell, but must use the procedure for attacking an unseen opponent to do so (see *Invisibility* on page 295 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

**Confused:** If the d% roll indicates that the creature can act normally this round, it can use its spell-like abilities this round, otherwise, a confused creature cannot use spell-like abilities.

**Dazzled:** The -1 penalty on attack rolls from this condition applies to any attack roll the creature makes to use a spell-like ability (such as a touch attack or ranged touch attack).

**Disabled:** Using a spell-like ability while disabled causes the creature to lose a hit point. Unless the spell-like ability increased the creature's hit points, it begins dying after it takes the damage.

**Energy Drained:** A creature retains its spell-like abilities (and its caster level for those abilities) no matter how many negative levels it gain or how many Hit Dice it might lose as a result of those negative levels. The penalties from negative levels apply to any attack rolls a creature makes to use a spell-like ability (such as a touch attack or ranged touch attack).

**Frightened:** If a frightened creature has a spell-like ability that allows it to flee from the source of its fear, it must use that ability to flee if it can't escape any other way.

**Grappled:** A creature can use its spell-like abilities if grappled. Doing so requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + the duplicated spell's level).

**Panicked:** If a panicked creature has a spell-like ability that allows it to flee from the source of its fear, it must use that ability to flee if it can't escape any other way.

**Pinned:** A creature can use its spell-like abilities if pinned. Doing so requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + the duplicated spell's level).

**Turned:** If a turned creature has a spell-like ability that allows it to flee from the source of the turning, it must use that ability to flee if it can't escape any other way.

## How Often Can Spell-Like Abilities Be Used?

Most spell-like abilities have a daily use limit (most often once a day or three times a day). A spell-like ability that is usable at will has no use limit at all, and the creature can use it as often as it likes; however, an at will ability still requires a standard action to use unless its description specifically says otherwise.

As noted earlier, spell-like abilities with daily use limits become available to the creature automatically each day. The creature doesn't need to rest, study, or prepare for them in any way. In this case, a "day" is any contiguous period of 24 hours. There is no set "recharge" time for a spell-like ability. Instead, the creature can use the ability a set number of times in any given period of 24 hours. For example, a lillend can use its *darkness* spell-like ability three times a day. The lillend cannot create three *darkness* effects at 11 PM one day, then create three more two hours later (at 1 AM the next day). Instead, the lillend can use *darkness* up to three times during any period of 24 consecutive hours. If she creates *darkness* at 11 PM on a given day, she can use the ability only twice more during the following 24 hours. Let's say she uses the power again at 1 AM the next day and again at 7 AM that same day. She has exhausted her daily limit on her darkness ability at 7 AM. The earliest she can use the ability again is 11 PM on the second day, when she can use the power only once (because she already has used the power twice during the preceding 24 hours). If she doesn't use the power at all after 7 AM the second day, the earliest that she will have three uses available again will be 7 AM on the third day.

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## About the Author

**Skip Williams** keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and has been the Sage of ***Dragon** Magazine* since 1986. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (his borscht gets rave reviews).

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